

Guidance for Parents on Penalty Notices

In St Helens penalty notices are issued in line with the Local Authority (LA) code of conduct. Penalty Notices are issued to parents if a child is absent from school or educational provision for the following reasons:

- 20 unauthorised sessions within a 10 school week period. Register code 'O'
- 10 unauthorised sessions late after registration closes within a 10 school week period. Register code 'U'
- 20 unauthorised sessions within a 10 school week period relating to leave of absence. Register code 'G'
- When a pupil is stopped on a Truancy Sweep and has had 3 separate periods of unauthorised absence within a 10 school week period or accrued 20 unauthorised sessions in a 10 school week period.
- Following a pupil being stopped in a public place whilst excluded from school (during the first five days of an exclusion)

Every child attends school for 2 sessions per day. 1 session relates to either attendance in a morning or in an afternoon.

The current LA Code of Conduct restricts the issuing of Penalty Notices to one per pupil, per parent in any single academic year.

The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of the receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days, but within 28 days of receipt.

For further information on penalty notices, please see: <https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/schools-education/education-welfare-service/legal-sanctions-for-unauthorised-school-absence>

Leave of absence

Following amendments to legislation in 2013 the government removed the term family holiday and extended leave from the pupil registration regulations. The amendments also removed the statutory threshold of ten school days being granted by Head teachers. Current guidance clearly states that Head teachers cannot grant any leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances.

In the UK the proportion of absence that family holidays (authorised and unauthorised) account for has increased, from 6.6% of all absence in autumn 2014 to 7.6% in autumn 2015.

For your information, outlined below is the Local Authority's position and expectations in relation to a child's overall level of attendance at school.

90% attendance = **Persistent Absentee (PA)** the current guidance issued by the Department for Education identifies pupils as persistent absentees if they miss 10% or more of their own possible sessions.

90% - 92% = **At Risk of becoming a Persistent Absentee (PA)** pupil. If your child's attendance reaches this level you will have been made aware of this fact. You may have received home visits or letters from the school regarding this low level of attendance.

92% - 94% = **Needs Improvement** If your child's attendance reaches this level you need to engage with the school to introduce strategies to improve your child's attendance and to prevent further absences.

94% - 95% = **Satisfactory**

95% and above = **Good Attendance**. It is expected that most children should reach this level of attendance.